

# Important Advances in Clinical Medicine

## *Epitomes of Progress -- Dermatology*

*The Scientific Board of the California Medical Association presents the following inventory of items of progress in Dermatology. Each item, in the judgment of a panel of knowledgeable physicians, has recently become reasonably firmly established, both as to scientific fact and important clinical significance. The items are presented in simple epitome and an authoritative reference, both to the item itself and to the subject as a whole, is generally given for those who may be unfamiliar with a particular item. The purpose is to assist the busy practitioner, student, research worker or scholar to stay abreast of these items of progress in Dermatology which have recently achieved a substantial degree of authoritative acceptance, whether in his own field of special interest or another.*

*The items of progress listed below were selected by the Advisory Panel to the Section on Dermatology of the California Medical Association and the summaries were prepared under its direction.*

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### Treatment of Superficial Malignancies With Topical 5-Fluorouracil

5-FLUOROURACIL (5FU) IS A FLUORINATED pyrimidine antimetabolite that inhibits thymidylate synthetase activity in human skin. Originally introduced for topical treatment of actinic keratoses, it has since been used to treat a variety of superficial malignant conditions of skin. Superficial basal cell carcinomas and intra-epidermal squamous cell carcinomas (Bowen's disease and erythroplasia of Queyrat) have responded favorably to 5FU treatment, although long-term followup remains uncertain as to recurrence rate. To be effective, 5FU must penetrate the full depth of tumor.

Treatment for two to four weeks with one to five percent 5FU lotion or ointment applied twice daily causes brisk inflammation, followed

by an erythematous peeling response and then clear skin. Adverse reactions include contact dermatitis, phototoxicity, and temporary accentuation of underlying cholasma and rosacea. General toxicity, such as bone marrow depression, does not occur. The efficacy of 5FU is not lost with repeated courses of treatment.

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